



## News Release

Communications New Brunswick

### N.B. Human Rights Commission

## Statement from Human Rights Commission / Disability Awareness Week (07/05/28)

NB 657

May 28, 2007

FREDERICTON (CNB) - The following is a statement by Gordon L. Porter, chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, on the occasion of Disability Awareness Week:

"Disability Awareness Week started this Sunday, May 27 and runs until Saturday, June 2. The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons and its partners have organized several events to celebrate this week.

"I am particularly pleased that this year's theme is 'Disability Awareness - Education for All', since access to education for people with a disability is an important issue that has several human rights aspects.

"The aspect with which I have been most involved personally has been inclusion, that is, including students with a physical or mental disability in regular classrooms. New Brunswick has been a pioneer in this area.

"The educational benefits of inclusion have been well established, but inclusion is not just a pedagogical issue. In most cases, it is legally required by the *Education Act* and by human rights case law.

"One of the advantages of inclusion is its ability to meet the social needs of students with a disability. However, this benefit can only be fully realized when the students feel accepted and valued, and are not harassed or bullied. Again, this is a human rights issue. All students are legally entitled to be free from harassment and bullying based on disability and the other grounds listed in the *Human Rights Act*. Educational institutions can be liable if they fail to ensure this.

"One of the biggest topics in human rights today is the duty to accommodate, that is, the duty to avoid the discriminatory effect of policies, practices, facilities and equipment. This duty comes into play in many ways with respect to students with a disability, from the need for wheelchair ramps, to teacher's assistants, to flexibility when applying attendance and discipline policies.

"These are all important issues, and the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission has been working on a guideline that will address them. It will be released in the coming months. We plan a major effort to make educators and parents aware of the responsibility society has to include children with disabilities in our schools and our communities.

"A great deal has already been accomplished to improve the educational opportunities available to students with a disability, and I would like to recognize and salute the hard work of the teachers and educational leaders who have made this possible.

"During Disability Awareness Week, we need to recognize our accomplishments but commit ourselves to do better in the days ahead. The New Brunswick Human Rights Commission can be counted on to play our part in this effort."

07/05/28

MEDIA CONTACT: Francis Young, N.B. Human Rights Commission, 506-453-2308 or 1-888- 471-2233; <http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/index.htm>.

07/05/28

---

**Communications New Brunswick**  
**E-mail | Contacts | Disclaimer | Privacy Statement**